

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A single-use device for sampling ~~or collecting~~ and recovering a target, said device comprising a sterile swab and a handle attached to said swab, wherein said swab is a gelatine-based sponge, and wherein said device is contained in a sealed package.

2-87. (Cancelled)

88. (Previously Presented) The device according to claim 1, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 30 g/g as determined by USP method "Absorbable Gelatine Sponge: Water Absorption".

89-90. (Cancelled)

91. (Previously Presented) A kit comprising:

- i) a swab and a handle attached to said swab, wherein said swab is a gelatine-based sponge; and
- ii) an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent, and a dispersion agent.

92. (Previously Presented) The kit according to claim 91, wherein said neutral diluent is selected from the group consisting of saline, saline peptone, buffered saline peptone, Ringer solution and an organic or inorganic buffer.

93. (Currently amended) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising:

- i) providing a swab comprising gelatine ~~or collagen~~; and

ii) making contact between the swab and the target to transfer said target from the collection medium to the swab; and

iii) transferring said target from the swab to a transfer medium to thereby recover said target from said collection medium.

94. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 93 wherein said swab comprises a gelatine-based sponge.

95. (Withdrawn) A method for sampling an area for a target comprising:

i) swiping the surface of the area with a first gelatine-based sponge pre-wetted with a neutral diluent or dispersing agent; followed by

ii) swiping said surface with a dry second gelatine-based sponge; and

iii) transferring said target from said first and second sponges to a transfer medium,

thereby recovering the target from said surface.

96. (Cancelled)

97. (Currently amended) A method of lowering the amount of a target in a sample area comprising:

(i) making contact between a swab comprising gelatine ~~or collagen~~, and at least a portion of said sample area[,]] so that an amount of the target adheres to the swab, and

(ii) transferring the adhered target from the swab to a transfer medium.

98. (Previously Presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95, wherein the collection medium or area is selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

99. (Previously Presented) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95 or 97, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a microorganism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

100. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 99, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

101. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 93, wherein said transferring step includes digestion of said gelatine ~~or collagen~~.

102. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 93, wherein said transferring step includes washing said target from the swab.

103. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 101, wherein the digestion comprises addition of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

104. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 101, further comprising extraction of the target by membrane filtration.

105. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 93, further comprising contacting said swab with an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an antimicrobial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

106. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 93, wherein said method further comprises culturing cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

107-117. (Cancelled)

118. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 99, wherein the micro-organism is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, bacterial spores, archaea, yeast and fungi.

119. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 99, wherein the mammalian cell is a cell from blood plasma.

120. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 119, wherein the mammalian cell is selected from the group consisting of leukocytes, erythrocytes and thrombocytes.

121-129. (Cancelled)

130. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) A method for cultivation of a micro-organism or a mammalian cell, said method comprising the steps of:

- i) contacting a swab comprising gelatine ~~or collagen~~ with a target contained in a sample, wherein said target binds to the swab,
- ii) injecting a liquid growth medium into the swab,
- iii) allowing in situ growth of the bound micro-organism or mammalian cell in the swab,
- iv) transferring the swab to a container with a liquid growth medium, and
- v) allowing for cultivation of the micro-organisms or mammalian cells in said liquid growth medium.

131. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130 comprising the further step of characterizing the cultivated micro-organisms or mammalian cells.

132. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the characterizing involves a qualitative determination of the micro-organism or mammalian cell.

133. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a food production line.

134. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the sample is obtained from a surface in a health clinic or a hospital.

135. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 130, wherein the sample is obtained from an open wound in an individual.

136. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 135, wherein the open wound is a surgical wound.

137. (Cancelled)

138. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 93 or 97, wherein said swab comprising gelatine ~~or collagen~~ is attached to a support.

139. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 138, wherein said support comprises a material selected from the group consisting of wood, natural or synthetic polymeric material, plastics, and rubber materials.

140. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 138, wherein said support has a form selected from the group consisting of a handle, a stick, a disc, a cube, a sphere, a block, a crucible and a coating.

141. (Withdrawn) A method for sampling an area for a target comprising:

i) a wet-sampling step comprising swiping the surface of the area with the gelatine-based sponge of a first device according to claim 1, wherein said gelatine-based sponge is pre-wetted;

ii) followed by a dry-sampling step comprising swiping said surface with the gelatine-based sponge of a second device according to claim 1,

iii) transferring target collected by said wet-sampling and dry-sampling steps to a transfer medium,

thereby recovering the target from said surface.

142. (Cancelled)

143. (Withdrawn) A method for cultivation of a micro-organism or a mammalian cell, said method comprising:

i) contacting a device for sampling or collecting comprising a handle attached to a gelatine-based sponge with a target contained in a sample, wherein said target binds to the sponge,

ii) injecting a liquid growth medium into said device,

iii) allowing in situ growth of the bound micro-organism or mammalian cell in said device,

iv) transferring said device to a container with a liquid growth medium, and

v) allowing for cultivation of the micro-organisms or mammalian cells in said liquid growth medium.

144. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) A method for sampling a collection medium for a target comprising

(i) contacting said collection medium with a swab comprising gelatine ~~or collagen~~; and

(ii) determining the amount of target recovered from said collection medium by said swab.

145. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 144, wherein the collection medium is selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

146. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 144, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a microorganism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

147. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 146, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

148. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) The method according to claim 144, wherein step (ii) comprises the digestion of the gelatine ~~or collagen~~.

149. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) The method according to claim 144, wherein step (ii) comprises the washing of target from the gelatine ~~or collagen~~.

150. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 148, wherein the digestion comprises the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

151. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 148, further comprising the extraction of the target from the swab by membrane filtration.

152. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 144, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

153. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 144, wherein said target comprises cells, and wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

154. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 146, wherein the microorganism is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, bacterial spores, archaea, yeast and fungi.

155. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 146, wherein the mammalian cell is a cell from blood plasma.

156. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 146, wherein the mammalian cell is selected from the group consisting of leukocytes, erythrocytes and thrombocytes.

157. (Withdrawn, Currently amended) The method according to claim 144, wherein said swab comprising gelatine or collagen is attached to a support.

158. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 141, wherein said handle comprises a material selected from the group consisting of wood, natural or synthetic polymeric material, plastics, and rubber materials.

159. (Cancelled)

160. (Previously Presented) The method according to any one of claims 93, 94, 97, and 144 wherein said swab is pre-wetted.

161. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 97, wherein said transferring step includes digestion of gelatine or collagen from the swab.

162. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 97, wherein said transferring step includes washing said target from the swab.

163. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 97, further comprising contacting said swab with an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an antimicrobial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

164. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 97, wherein said target comprises cells and wherein said method further comprises culturing cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.